

Justice for Cole, Justice for Many

This letter has been penned in memory of our son, Cole Patrick McMahon, and all the innocent victims who have been killed by a “drugged” driver. Cole was killed on October 16, 2006 at 6:50 A.M. He had just been hired as a Technology Teacher and Assistant Football Coach at Fort LeBoeuf High School. Cole was driving to work when a vehicle crossed the center lane causing a head-on collision. Cole was only 24 when he died. An autopsy of the driver of the other vehicle revealed alcohol, methadone, and other opiates in his system. Had the state revoked his driver’s license due to substance abuse, our son would be alive today.

Our family is committed to reforming the process by which the Methadone Clinics are managed and committed to enforce stricter driving laws for “impaired drivers” in Pennsylvania.

My husband and I had meetings with Mr. Gary Tennis, Secretary of Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs, Senator Kim Ward, Senator Mary Jo White, Senator Scott Hutchinson, Representative Lee James, District Attorney Shawn White, Pharmacist Christine Coffman, Venango County Commissioners; Mr. Tim Brooks, Mrs. Bonnie Sommers, and Mr. Vince Witherup, Marie Plummer, Dennis McCune, Dr. Moran, The

Honorable Judge Oliver Lobaugh, and Chief of Police Robert Wenner. I feel it is safe to state that each person we spoke to concurred that Pennsylvania needs to reform Methadone Clinics and endorse stricter consequences for “impaired drivers. Malachy and I appreciate the legislative bills that have been passed; such as reduced pay for methadone clients and the Pharmaceutical Data Base, and the Methadone Death and Incident Review Act initiated in 2012. These bills are not enough. In order for our highways to become safer more legislation is needed. We are not asking for sympathy. We are demanding change for all constituents by requesting governmental entities to propose effective legislation. We demand that Methadone Clinics no longer enable addicts to continue to use drugs; rather, empower ^{addicts} them to overcome their addiction to opiates. Stricter laws for “impaired drivers” need to be implemented and enforced. Be assured that we do not think that people using opiates are bad people; they are people making bad choices. Some pieces are missing from Methadone Reform. Instead of the physician referring the patient to a Methadone Clinic, he or she should refer the patient to a local Drug and Alcohol Facility. The counselor from that agency would assess the client and determine the best MAT (Medical Assisted Treatment). The goal of MAT is to recover from addiction; not to replace one addictive drug for

another.

Also, clinics need to be committed to a recovery plan for each individual.

There is no simple recovery plan or time limit for any client. The client must also be committed to the MAT plan. If a client refuses to comply with the plan any health coverage would be denied. Methadone policies need reformed.

It is time for the Methadone Madness to end. Instead of enabling addicts, we need to give them ownership in his/ her recovery plan. In order for this feat to be accomplished new legislation must be formulated and enforced.

Many people in the audience have the power to make these changes possible. I am speaking with you today, not as a mother concerned on a local level, but as a person concerned for humanity. Thank you for your time and patience. Mr. Tennis, the ball is in your court!